

Younger Women in America

There are more than 11,000,000 girls ages 9 to 14 in the United States. Female teenage Internet users increased 126% from 1999 to 2000. Girls, especially those ages 12 - 15, are among the fastest growing groups on the Internet, with 87% now online. Since 1999, the number of teen girls online has more than doubled, to 4.4 million. More American women are online than American men, a first in U.S. history. Nearly 70% of all 12 to 19 year-olds go online each week. Girls are generally just as likely as boys to use computers at home and at school, although some of the activities for which they use computers differ.

Girls and Technology

The projected top five fastest growing occupations between 1998 and 2008 are information technology occupations, which require advanced computer skills. However, girls enroll more in clerical and data entry computer courses than in advanced computer classes. In 1998, girls made up only 17% of the high school students who took the Advanced Placement exam in computer science. Likewise, parents purchase technology twice as much for their sons as their daughters, while at school only a quarter of the students using computers during free time were girls. Twenty-one percent of the 12 to 17-year old girls do their homework right when they get home from school. Seventeen percent of 12 to 17-year old boys do the same thing.

Girls and Health

The average adolescent girl consumes only about 800 milligrams of calcium per day, 500 milligrams less than the current Dietary Reference Intake. One thousand eight hundred forty girls aged 18 and under had breast augmentation surgery in 1998. Nine hundred seventy-eight had the surgery in 1992. Eight thousand seventy-four girls aged 18 and under had nose reconstructive surgery in 1998, compared to 5,519 in 1992. Thirty-four percent of high school girls consider themselves overweight, compared to 22% of high school boys. Ninety percent of all cases of eating disorders are found among girls and young women. Adolescent girls and boys are now equally likely to drink or use illicit drugs. Girls are now equally likely or more likely than boys to smoke, depending on age. Each year, nearly one million teenage women, 10% of all women aged 15 to 19, become pregnant.

Girls and Sports

Participation in vigorous physical activity declines beginning in early adolescence: 61% of ninth-grade girls are vigorously active, compared to only 42.4% of twelfth-grade girls. At all grade levels, girls are significantly less active than boys. Title IX is federal legislation passed in 1972 designed to prohibit gender discrimination in educational settings. Prior to the passage of Title IX in 1972, 300,000 young women participated in interscholastic athletics nationwide. In 1997, 2.25 million girls participated in sports.

Source: Wider Opportunities for Women

Missouri Women's Council

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Organizations and Resources

Over 2,700,000 girls are involved in Girl Scouts worldwide. Over 350,000 young people are served by Girls Incorporated. Approximately 41% of Boys and Girls Club members are female. Below is a list of resources and organizations geared toward improving the lives and experiences of young women and girls.

Design Your Future. Many people recognize Autodesk, Inc., as a world leader in the design software industry. But there's another side to the company that may not be as well known -- its long-term commitment to leadership by example in education. "Design Your Future: Math, Science, and Technology for Girls" is an educational initiative that was launched by Autodesk in October, 1997. Visit their website at <http://www.autodesk.com/dyf/dyfmain2.html>.

Girls Incorporated is a national nonprofit youth organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. For over 55 years, Girls Inc. has provided vital educational programs to millions of American girls, particularly those in high-risk, underserved areas. Today, innovative programs help girls confront subtle societal messages about their value and potential, and prepare them to lead successful, independent, and fulfilling lives. Visit their website at <http://www.girlsinc.org/ic/>.

Girl Power! is an educational website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Girls beginning at 8 or 9 typically have very strong attitudes about their health, so Girl Power! seeks to reinforce and sustain these positive values among girls ages 9-13 by targeting health messages to the unique needs, interests, and challenges of girls. Visit their website at <http://www.girlpower.gov/>.

Girl Scouts of the USA is the world's pre-eminent organization dedicated solely to girls — all girls — where, in an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. In partnership with committed adult volunteers, Girl Scouts cultivate their full individual potential. The qualities they develop in Girl Scouting — leadership, values, social conscience, and conviction about their own self-worth — serve them all their lives. Visit their website at <http://www.girlscouts.org/index.html>.

Independent Means is the leading provider of products and services for girls' financial independence, and for parents trying to raise financially fit kids. They are a good stop for news and know-how on starting a business; making, saving, giving and growing money. They provide on-the-ground programs and seminars, books, games and activities for teens, parents and mentors, and the companies that serve them. Visit their website at <http://www.independentmeans.com/>.

The Ms. Foundation is a national, multi-issue, public women's fund, supporting the efforts of women and girls to govern their own lives and influence the world around them. They fund and assist women's self-help organizing efforts, and pursue changes in public consciousness, law, philanthropy, and social policy. The foundation directs resources to break down barriers based on race, class, age, disability, sexual orientation and culture. They also sponsor *Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day* on an annual basis. Visit their website at <http://www.ms.foundation.org/index.html>.

Work 4 Women provides tools, strategies and a virtual community to help increase women and girls' integration and retention in high-wage jobs that are considered nontraditional for women. Nontraditional occupations (NTOs) are jobs in which women comprise 25% or less of the workforce. This is a project of the Wider Opportunities for Women. Visit their website at <http://www.work4women.org/index.cfm>.